

Town of Canton, Massachusetts
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
Minutes of April 12, 2021

The April 12, 2021 meeting of the Canton Community Preservation Committee was held remotely (on Zoom platform) consistent with Governor Baker’s Executive Order of March 12, 2020 suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law. The meeting was posted on the Town’s website along with directions detailing how the public could participate and was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

Committee members in attendance: Stacey Gorman, Lisa Lopez, George Comeau, Shaun Chu, John McSweeney, John Leonetti, Josh Cohen, David McCarthy (joined at 7:20 p.m.)

MINUTES

Upon a motion made by L. Lopez, seconded by G. Comeau, the Committee was polled and voted 6-0-1 to approve the minutes of February 22, 2021.

J. McSweeney – Aye

L. Lopez – Aye

G. Comeau – Aye

J. Leonetti – Aye

J. Cohen – Abstain

S. Chu – Aye

S. Gorman – Aye

CPA FUND – DISCUSSION WITH TOWN FINANCE DIRECTOR

Town of Canton Finance Director, Randy Scollins, was present to discuss CPA Fund assumptions/functions. He reviewed the CPA tax levy which is slightly less than 1 percent due to exemptions. This leads to a dollar figure of “committed” taxes which is the basis for the estimated CPA revenue. He added that tax collection in Canton averaged about 99.8% and anything that does not get paid in the current fiscal year is “insured” by imposing a lien. The Town ultimately collects 100% + of taxes owed (as town charges 14% interest).

R. Scollins gave a brief explanation of municipal “fund” accounting, noting that anything collected into CPA fund stays in that fund (53E ½ Fund). J. Leonetti asked whether there was a way to undertake a reconciliation for these funds. R. Scollins explained that the only information being tracked in the system is “actual” revenue and expenses (MUNIS does not include estimated revenue), which is what led to the recent disconnect regarding fund balances. He added that the Town Accountant is working on a report that (1) blends actual balances with estimated revenues and (2) ties back actual expenses to projected expenses. J. Leonetti requested a follow up meeting to review that report upon completion.

R. Scollins addressed the manner in which CPA motions appropriated dollars to the various “buckets” (Historic, Open Space, Affordable Housing, Undesignated). In prior years, the CPA article included a motion to appropriate to “buckets” before appropriating out of those buckets for projects. He explained that there is not a statutory requirement to do this; however, the motions should be written to identify the category that the project falls into. Discussion regarding “returning” unexpended funds followed. The Committee generally agreed that in the event a project is closed with funds remaining, anything over the required 10% project allocation should go to the undesignated fund reserve as this approach would allow for maximum flexibility. R. Scollins will follow up with accounting to ensure that project codes will allow for robust reporting that addresses these concerns.

PREPARATION FOR ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Project proponents have been asked to submit a brief video explaining their projects which will be posted on the CCPC website along with the traditional project information sheets. In addition to the information on the website, the CCPC will have representation at the virtual pre-Town Meeting event and agreed to hold “citizen’s time” at a regularly scheduled CCPC meeting prior to Annual Town Meeting to answer any questions about this year’s project recommendations.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION PLAN UPDATE – REVIEW

S. Gorman explained the process underway to update the Community Preservation Plan Update. K. Phelps explained the purpose of the most recent section distributed to Committee members, noting that the intent is for CCPC members to consider overall goals and publish funding priorities. Feedback on the draft of section 2 included: (1) clarifying that the goals are intended to be a guideline for applicants and not a scored set of criteria; (2) including the “track record” of applicants for completing prior projects as part of the review process; and (3) eliminating duplicative goals. K. Phelps noted that some communities have established spending goals for the undesignated reserve funds to demonstrate a heightened commitment to one of the eligible funding categories. CCPC members agreed that they would prefer not to dedicate more than the required 10% to any one funding category. With respect to the introductory section, J. Leonetti requested that an explanation of the budgeting structure/process be included and S. Chu suggested including examples of past accomplishments. G. Comeau would like to see a flow-chart that can guide applicants through the process of seeking CPA funds in Canton. The process of updating the full plan will continue in the coming months and further feedback on the draft sections will be sought throughout the plan update process.

OTHER BUSINESS

S. Gorman provided an update of the CPA presentation to the Finance Committee. She noted that a pre-town meeting event has been tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, May 12, 2021 as a way of informing the public about the proposed warrant articles. The Committee agreed to schedule their next meeting for May 17, 2021 with the intent of following up on any CPA questions raised at the 5/12/21 meeting and giving the public a chance to ask any further questions about project recommendations prior to Town Meeting.

Motion to adjourn at 8:12 p.m. by G. Comeau, seconded by J. Cohen, unanimously approved 8-0-0 by roll call vote.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Kristen Phelps

**Kristen Phelps
CPA Administrator**